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GREAT REFORMERS: THOMAS PAINE

FOR the things that most men pursue throughout their lives, Thomas Paine cared nothing at all, except as an afterthought, and under the grim reminders of poverty and neglect. He was a man whose feet were firmly planted upon abstract principles of political and moral philosophy; he needed the air of freedom, not for himself, but for all men, the way other people needed food and drink and shelter. With Paine, there was never a problem of choosing between devotion to the interests of mankind and his personal necessity. He acted, almost by reflex, for the general good, and when he found himself forgotten, distrusted, and left to his own meager and often nonexistent resources, he was humiliated to think that the principles he lived by meant so little to other men. He saw the neglect of his personal welfare as a kind of public shame—which, indeed, it was. His only weakness, perhaps, was that he could not understand how, in the New World of his dreams, so much of the self-interest of the Old World could persist, and his failure to comprehend the slow progress of human development made him at times bitter and aggrieved.

Thomas Paine has a twofold importance for the modern world. He should be known, first, for his historic service to the American Revolution. Without knowledge of what he did, the story of the founding of the United States is a fragmentary thing. Second, he should be known for his extraordinary qualities as a human being. Paine was a heroic man. Unless his spirit can be born again—and it will not, without a living sense of its possibility—the world will wither into mediocrity and self-contempt. There is a literal hunger, today, for men of the breadth and stature of Thomas Paine, but it is mostly an uninstructed hunger—a consciousness of need without the sensibility of the sort of leadership that a man like Thomas Paine would provide, today. For Paine was a revolutionary: he knew what he thought was right, and why, and was incapable of acting on any other basis. For Paine to compromise on his principles would have been an act of self-destruction. He lived a life without alternatives, in which prudential considerations, fine distinctions or delaying indecision played no part at all. He was, in short, a kind of historical necessity for the birth of the American Republic. Without him, it might never have taken place.

Paine's life, apart from American history, is a drab affair. He was born in 1737, of a Church of England mother and a Quaker father, in Thetford, England. Little is known of his early life, except that he attended a school in Thetford which was much better than other village schools. Paine never wrote of his childhood; he is known to have been bright in school, although Latin, which was the main course, did not interest him. At thirteen he began to learn his father's trade, the making of corsets. At sixteen he ran away to go to sea on a privateer, the *Terrible*, captained by a man with the appropriate name of Death. His father forestalled this venture, but two years later young Paine succeeded in joining the crew of another privateer. After one cruise he gave up being a sailor and became an apprentice in a London staymaker's shop. He spent his evenings studying astronomy, philosophy and mathematics. The next two or three years, until 1761, he spent working as a staymaker in various shops. His first marriage, to Mary Lambert, who died within a year, belonged to this period. Failing to make a living at staymaking, Paine became an exciseman in the employ of the Government. In 1765 he was discharged for taking the word of tavern-keepers concerning their taxable stock. Paine went back to staymaking, but early in the following year he became an English teacher—a somewhat surprising occupation for one with so little formal

education. Meanwhile, he wrote letters to regain the confidence of the Excise Board, and in 1768, when Paine was thirty-one, he received another appointment as exciseman, at Lewes, in Sussex. Here, for the first time, we hear of his intellectual life. He formed the habit of meeting informally at a tavern with "respectable, sensible and convivial" friends for the purpose of discussion and debate. Paine had ten years of self-education behind him and he soon won the respect of the group. According to Thomas Rickman, a lifelong friend, Paine was at that time a Whig in politics, and "notorious for that quality which has been defined as perseverance in a good cause and obstinacy in a bad one. He was tenacious of his opinions, which were bold, acute and independent, and which he maintained with ardor, elegance and argument." One biographer says of him:

> His mind had a pronounced tendency to disregard authoritative opinions, including the views of famous writers who had lived in the past. He tried, instinctively, to put all streams of logic into their most primitive forms. He argued that if you start out with a time-honored assertion which you accept as valid just because it comes from Lord Bacon or Aristotle you may be on the wrong road altogether, for Bacon and Aristotle may be wrong.

Paine's skill in advocacy and dispute became known among the excisemen of England, and when these civil servants, who were poorly paid, wanted someone to represent them in their appeal to Parliament, they chose Paine to state their case. Flashes of the genius that was to characterize his later writings are noticeable in the paper he wrote on the plight of the excisemen. His argument was that underpaid tax collectors find it difficult to be incorruptible. Fine orations on honesty, he said, are all very well, but "poverty, like grief, has an incurable deafness, which never hears." He described the conditions under which the families of the excisemen lived, and added:

> The rich, in ease and affluence, may think I have drawn an unnatural portrait; but could they descend to the cold regions of want, the circle of polar poverty, they would find their opinions changing with the climate. There are habits of thinking peculiar to different conditions, and to find them out is truly to study mankind.

All of Paine's writings have this practical cutting edge. He always had something to say, and he schooled himself to say it so that he would be understood by ordinary people.

Several things more were to happen to Paine before he set out for America. He was to find that Parliament was not in the least interested in treating the excisemen justly, and he lost his post in the service for absenting himself from his duties without permission. Paine had married a second time. His wife owned a tobacco shop which Paine attempted to operate, but he had none of the shrewdness in buying and selling by which small merchants survive, and heavy debts caused him to hide from his creditors to avoid landing in debtors' prison. After his discharge as exciseman, a formal separation from his wife severed his last tie with stability. He went to London in June, I774. He was thirty-seven years old, without employment, without prospects, and with almost no money. It was then that he renewed his acquaintance with Benjamin Franklin, whom he had met while in London to act on behalf of the excisernen. Franklin advised him to make a new start in America and gave him a letter to his son-in-law. Paine took ship in September and arrived in Philadelphia on November 30, so sick with fever that he had to be carried ashore. A few months later, the Lexington farmers fired the shot that was "heard round the world."

Now began Paine's life as an American patriot and a champion of all mankind. The rest of the story is inseparable from the events of revolutionary history. In the years that followed, Paine wrote four works which made him, in his time, the most widely read man in America, the man most hated by the British Tories, the man most vilified by orthodox Christians, and the man most praised and respected by the great leaders of the American Revolution.

The first of these works was *Common Sense*, a small book or pamphlet which appeared in

January, 1776. In it Paine declared for separation of the American colonies from England—for *"the FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES OF AMERICA."* Within six months, 100,000 copies had been sold at two shillings each. There were no copyright laws in those days and other printers soon copied Paine's work. The total distribution is estimated at 300,000, and possibly more.

Paine was a common man. He knew the oppressions of a class society at first hand. Poverty had been his lifelong companion. He knew also that fundamental reforms would not take place in England, nor would the English mend their ways in dealing with the American colonies. And he knew, now, what freedom meant. He was living in its atmosphere. Soon after arriving in America he had become the successful editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine.* While in England he had been only a lady's tailor and an impoverished tax collector, but in America he was suddenly a man of parts. America had welcomed him and given him scope. Now all his love of principle, all his sympathies for the downtrodden, and all his years of study and his practice of simple, incisive expression burst forth. But Paine was no fanatic. His prose has measure and accuracy, his passion, discipline. He wrote for other common men, making the profound thought of the eighteenth-century reformers and political philosophers accessible in unpretentious but forceful language. He wrote with color, power and decision. *Common Sense* made up the mind of the colonists: *America must be free.*

Paine gained only debts from publication of this book. The printer received half the profits from the first edition; with his own half, Paine bought mittens for the American troops that were going to fight at Quebec. He financed another edition himself and sold it at cost to get it widely distributed. After three years, publication of *Common Sense* left him "thirty-nine pounds eleven shillings out of pocket." This was characteristic. Paine would never take money for work done for the American cause.

Common Sense written, Paine joined the revolutionary army. He met Washington, who admired his writing, and became a friend of General Greene. In December, I776, a few days before the attack on Trenton, Paine wrote his first *Crisis* to cheer the dejected American troops. His voice was like a high clear trumpet call that made the soldiers know that even if they lacked shoes, they had ideals: "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

Paine was not a warlike man, but he would serve the right with the last breath in his body. It was this whole-souled giving of himself that gave his words their living fire. His sentences grew into a vision that combined the familiar with the glorious. He made the farmers and artisans in Washington's army grasp something of the greatness that their leaders understood, and realize that they had a part in that greatness. He, a commoner, rebuked the King of England. And they, free men, too, learned to rebuke the King along with him. They began to feel the freedom they were fighting for, to know its essence and to treasure it.

Paine set off for Europe in the spring of 1787 to market the iron bridge he had invented. The model of his bridge attracted much attention in Paris and London. He was in Paris in 1789, the year of the French Revolution, and again in 1790. Lafayette, whom he knew well, entrusted to him the key to the Bastille, to be given to General Washington. Paine, however, remained in Europe and sent the key to Washington by a friend. In November, Edmund Burke's pamphlet, *Reflections on the French Revolution* appeared. Paine swiftly wrote an answer, his *Rights of Man*, of which Part I came out in March, 1791, and Part II in the following year. Burke had seen intolerable excesses in the French Revolution. Paine saw something else. A writer in the *Nation (Feb.* 23, 1946) has excellently summarized the contents of *The Rights of Man:*

> Paine preached the doctrines of natural rights, social compact, and right of revolution in their classic simplicity, not only because he was incapable of more complex thinking, but also because he had a more pressing motive for preaching them than other theorists of the century. Actually, the doctrine was a learned production, best understood by men like Jefferson who could see through the cloudy style of John Locke and follow the demonstrations of Isaac Newton; Paine was neither gentleman nor scholar. He was poor and self-educated; the theory of natural goodness and natural rights was not the amusement of his leisure. For him the debate was to be won not in the library but among men. Above all, it had to be made clear to the mass of men. . . . he was at his best when he ridiculed Burke's purple passage on the vanished chivalry of France which should have rallied to the side of a silly queen with his devastating epigram, "He pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird," or when he exposed Burke's perversion of the Glorious Revolution by declaring that the Parliament of 1688 might as well have enacted themselves to live forever as have made their authority to live forever.

This writer, however, is just to Burke, Paine's former friend:

> When he [Paine] replied only by exploding Burke's rhetoric, and by straightforwardly asserting the rational doctrine, Paine betrayed a complete inability to grasp Burke's vision of society as organic and not contractual, Burke's concept of a man as an emotional being and not a calculating machine. Paine could perceive that Burke's eloquence was a defence of the status quo, but he could not see that Burke understood some tendencies in human nature better than he, tendencies which even at that moment were carrying the French Revolution into directions that nullified the rational doctrine. It was Burke and not Paine who predicted Napoleon.

Paine's fourth great contribution was *The Age of Reason*, a defense of natural religion and an attack upon the infallibility of the Christian Bible. He wrote the first part in France, during 1793, while the Jacobins rose to power and proceeded to guillotine the moderates of the Revolution, the Girondists, with whom Paine's sympathies lay. Paine had spoken to the convention against the execution of King Louis—he had been made a member of the Convention by the admiring people of a French department—and the extremists were enraged at him for his humanity. The Jacobins finally caused his arrest and he escaped the guillotine only by a strange accident. Much of the ten months he spent in the Luxembourg prison was given to writing the second part of *The Age of Reason.* This book was a work dedicated to the emancipation of the human mind, and that, over the one hundred and fifty years since it was written, has been its effect. It was also the cause of endless calumny of its author, from the first lying biographies of 1791 and 1809, to Theodore Roosevelt's unhappy characterization of him as "a filthy little atheist."

Paine was a single-minded man who stated the truth as he saw it, without fear of consequences, and it was part of his genius that he attacked every major evil of his time. Within a year of his arrival in America, he called for the abolition of Negro slavery. He was first to propose American independence; first to suggest international arbitration as a substitute for war. He defended the rights of women and advocated public education for children of the poor. A review of his works makes it apparent that there was no cause of human good that he did not support; and a review of his life shows that he lived only for the causes in which he believed. His personal life was irreproachable. He engaged in no intrigues, amorous or otherwise. He was not a heavy drinker, as his enemies declared, and as a recent fictional story of his life by Howard Fast portrays him. He did not "repent" on his deathbed for having written *The Age of Reason*—this is an invention of his enemies. There are several biographies of Paine which show the falsity of these charges and the despicable motives behind them. One good "life" is *Tom Paine: America's Godfather*, by W. E. Woodward, published by Dutton in 1945. The most recent edition of his complete works is that of Philip S. Foner, in two volumes, published by the Citadel Press.

Paine was not a faultless man. But what imperfections may be found in his character seem utterly insignificant. He was greater in his

capacity for good than any of the saints in or out of any church, anywhere. This is a fact which persons of a religious temperament ought to ponder. And Paine was religious, too—he believed in a divine power and pointed to the reality of the brotherhood of man. There is no religion greater than this.

We have quoted little from Paine in this brief survey—so much of what he wrote is vitally important that making selections seems a futile undertaking. But one passage, contained in his essay, Agrarian Justice, sums up the intent of all his labors, and the meaning of his life. It reads:

> An army of principles will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot; it will succeed where diplomatic management would fail: it is neither the Rhine, the Channel, nor the Ocean that can arrest its progress: it will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer.

Letter from GERMANY

BERLIN.—The collapse of the "old" Germany after World War II has been so comprehensive that it is often asked whether the class structure is still in existence. The persons from all social levels reduced to poverty through bombing or displacement constitute a huge mass of perhaps 10 million people who seem to have reached a uniform level of destitution, resembling a new kind of proletariat.

Nicolaus Sombart, in a brilliant article in *Volk und Zeit*, sets forth the view that only three social groups of Germans are left: (1) all those in some way dependent upon the Allies, with a correspondingly high standard of living; (2) those whose economic security is strengthened by their social function as manufacturers tradesmen, or administrators; and (3) the remaining Germans—about 70 per cent of the population—composed of refugees, wage earners, etc., who are struggling desperately with all means at their disposal to maintain their bare existence.

Sombart calls his article "Total Corruption," for these groups, in themselves as well as in their mutual relationships, are characterized by unprecedented social corruption. The author asks: "Is not that which appears as human depravity perhaps nothing else than the final unmasking of an innate immorality of the 'bourgeoisie'?" Sombart describes the present social transformation in Germany as having created a broad mass layer under proletarian conditions, and he suggests that this development is the prerequisite for social revolution. In the following number of the same magazine, another author, Hans Werner Richter, replying to Sombart, endeavors to show that the class distinctions created by industrial capitalism still exist, in spite of all changes; that in the ranks of the declassed—who as yet do not represent a new class—the desires and ideas of each class continue to live.

Richter's view, we believe, is closer to the truth. The class structure is essentially the same as it was before—except for a considerably larger proletariat and much greater misery of the population as a whole. (In the Soviet zone, a bureaucratic control of the economy and society is developing, like that established in the Soviet Union itself.) To Richter's analysis, however, we would add the observation that *all* classes in Germany, not only the working class, have lost their freedom. And this applies to *all* zones—not only in the sense of the political freedom lost by a conquered and occupied country, but lack of freedom due to the strangulation of productive processes, the excessive regulation of foreign trade, the closing of the borders, and the psychological depression of a people without hope or anything to look forward to. Thus it would seem that the problem of human emancipation can no longer be solved by a single class—the socially oppressed class, the proletariat—which would free itself and thereby usher in the beginning of human emancipation. (And likewise it is no longer possible for this emancipation to take place at the national level.)

On the contrary, the social disintegration in Germany—a social, moral, intellectual, psychic, material disintegration—has resulted in such rotten stagnation and inner tension that new points of development will necessarily emerge whenever the external fetters are removed, due to any causes at all outside Germany. But the human emancipation which might be possible—since the restoration of the old conditions likewise is impossible—can be achieved, however, only in unison with the rest of the world, and probably will differ from all social schemes so far taught and preached by social utopians ("utopians" having to include those socialists who hitherto have called themselves "scientific" socialists, on whom even Hans Werner Richter's views are based, his criticisms notwithstanding). The analyses of these utopians—insofar as they were free from opportunistic bias—have often afforded insight into social conditions, but in each case their prognostications commonly reflect the attitude of the socialist movement as conditioned by the present situation, and are without the vision to comprehend the extraordinary factors created by the great wars of the twentieth century.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
AMERICAN FORESTER

PUBLICATION of *Breaking New Ground*, the autobiography of Gifford Pinchot, the first Forester of the United States, is timely for several reasons. Pinchot, who died in 1946 at the age of eighty-one years, was the sort of public servant who creates a great tradition. Much of the enthusiasm for conservation in the United States is due to his leadership and practical accomplishments in planning and inaugurating the conservation program of the U. S. Forest Service. This book (Harcourt, Brace & Co., $5) tells the story of his life from boyhood until 1910, when he was removed from his post as head of the Forest Service for having defended the interests of the people with more vigor and integrity than was to the liking of President Taft.

The pertinence of Mr. Pinchot's book to the great issues of conservation now before the public is obvious. It was Gifford Pinchot who, as one reviewer has said, with President Theodore Roosevelt "carved out an ecological concept of full conservation (a name they coined from the fact that India had Conservancy Districts)—an interrelated attack on soil, water, wood, mineral, game, animal and human waste which, even today, has never been grasped or realized."

Another pertinence of the book, equally important, is in its illustration of what a government official can and ought to be. In these days of menacing Statism, political criticism tends toward an anarchist mood, with little interest in the problems and responsibilities of public administrators.

"How would you like to be a forester?" This question, put to Gifford Pinchot by his father in 1885, started him on his lifework in forestry and conservation. There was not a single forester in the United States at that time, so, after finishing college, Pinchot left for Europe in 1889 to attend the French Forest School at Nancy. One of his teachers told him: "When you get home to America you must manage a forest and make it pay." Pinchot never forgot this advice. He studied forestry in Germany and Switzerland, and under Sir Dietrich Brandis in England he learned of the program of systematic forest management carried on in Burma and India since 1856. Brandis made a deep impression on the young American:

> Dr. Brandis never let his pupils forget a great truth which most German foresters have never grasped—that in the long run Forestry cannot succeed unless the people who live in and near the forest are for it and not against it. That was the keynote of his work in India. And when the pinch came, the application of that same truth was what saved the National Forests in America.

Pinchot returned home in 1890 to find America the place of widest opportunity for forestry, but no forestry. Instead, rapid and extensive destruction of the forests was in full swing, It was the period of sudden expansion following the Civil War—the age of the "robber barons" and the rush to capture for private interests the natural wealth of the country. The new transcontinental railroads had opened up the frontier to exploitation, and, as Pinchot says, "The man who could get his hands on the biggest slice of natural resources was the best citizen." His first job was the management of 7,000 acres of forest land in North Carolina, the property of George W. Vanderbilt. Pinchot set out to prove the importance of conservation to the country, by showing that careful management of a privately owned forest could be profitable to the owner.

Breaking New Ground tells the story of how the idea of conservation gradually took on importance for public-spirited Americans. In 1897, ten days before leaving office, Grover Cleveland increased the Forest Reserves of the United States to a total of 35 million acres. In 1898, James Wilson, Secretary of Agriculture, offered Pinchot the job of Chief of the Forestry Division, a bureau created in 1880 in the Department of Agriculture. Pinchot was given the title of Forester, a free hand, and an appropriation

of $28,520 to cover all expenses. By 1905, as a result of Pinchot's efforts, the work of the Bureau had become widely known. President Roosevelt, a close friend of Pinchot, was a strong supporter of conservation, and in that year of his administration Congress changed the name of the Bureau of Forestry to the U. S. Forest Service and empowered the Service to control all use made of National Forest lands. In Pinchot's words:

> For us in the Forest Service the transfer meant a revolutionary change. Before the Forest Reserves came into our hands, all we could say to whoever controlled a forest, public or private, was "Please." That we said it to some effect was proved by the number of applications of timber owners for forest work in plans for millions of acres of their private lands, from the Interior Department for many more millions of Forest Reserves, from the State of New York for lands in the Adirondack State Forest Preserve, from the War Department for military reservations, and more besides.
>
> Before the transfer we were limited to peaceful penetration. While many still regarded Forestry as pernicious nonsense, comparatively few people were sore at us because nobody was compelled to do as we said.
>
> After the transfer the situation was radically changed. While we could still say nothing but "Please" to private forest owners, on the national Forest Reserves we could say, and we did say, "Do this," and "Don't do that." We had the power, as we had the duty, to protect the Reserves for the use of the people, and that meant stepping on the toes of the biggest interests of the West. From that time on it was fight, fight, fight.

Gifford Pinchot is a colorful, salty writer who is able to recreate the intensity of his fight on behalf of conservation. Those who have followed the current controversy between the Forest Service and the cattlemen and sheepmen who would like to eliminate Government supervision of grazing on federal lands will find that Pinchot was the pioneer who first campaigned for this protection of the watersheds and soil of the country. The dust storms of 1935 were largely the result of overgrazing, and it was this incalculable destruction which the Forest Service sought to avoid on public lands. As Pinchot says:

> In the early days of the grazing trouble, when the protection of the public timberlands was a live political issue, we were faced with this simple choice: Shut out all grazing and lose the Forest Reserves, or let stock in under control and save the Reserves for the Nation. It seemed to me there was but one thing to do. We did it, and because we did it some 175,000,000 acres of National Forests today safeguard the headwaters of most Western rivers, and some Eastern rivers as well.

(For an account of the grazing problem as it exists today, see articles and "Easy Chair" discussions by Bernard DeVoto in *Harper's* for January, 1947, and May and July, 1948.)

One charm of *Breaking New Ground* which should not be overlooked is in the description of field trips made by Pinchot for the purpose of establishing the boundaries of the National Forests. Pinchot was naturally an outdoor man, and it is evident that his expeditions into the American wilderness were undertaken with the same zest that characterized his championship of the rights of the people. But most of all, Gifford Pinchot's life story is important for its philosophy of public service and its practical illustration of what a strong, able man of integrity can accomplish for the public good.

COMMENTARY
TOTALITARIAN MOOD

IN New York, a group of clergymen have appealed to the State legislature to enact a law permitting the practice of euthanasia, or "mercy killing," with the consent of the sufferer and under legal supervision. In Los Angeles, a young mother with an "uncontrollable temper" chose a sterilization operation as the alternative to a prison sentence. She had beaten her baby to death. She is twenty-one, and has had a baby every year since she was sixteen.

In Washington, an organization called the Population Reference Bureau is calling for a national program of birth control. The Census Bureau recently announced that the total population of the country is now 148 million. World population is increasing at the rate of 200 million every ten years, and some substitute for war, such as birth control, is urged for curtailing the number of humans.

Meanwhile, Federal Security Administrator Oscar R. Ewing has issued a plan for compulsory health insurance in combination with an enormously expanded public health program. Congress, under this plan, would provide financial aid to the States, and the Federal Government would institute campaigns such as the Venereal Disease Program, expecting the States to make examinations or treatments compulsory.

Such "social" measures and methods for dealing with human beings, individually and in the mass, imply an official infallibility remarkably similar in mood, if not in intent, to the measures and methods of political control applied by totalitarian governments. Ostensibly undertaken or suggested for the "good of the people," they represent in fact a broad movement toward regimentation of personal life, by either law or psychological duress. They involve mass acceptance of the premises of contemporary medical theory, on the authority of the State, in much the same way that the State guaranteed the premises of organized religion in the Middle Ages.

This is not a question of challenging any particular "truth" of the contemporary scientific orthodoxy, but of the right of any individual to live his own physical life and choose his own medicine, without prejudice or penalty, and to practice his own physiological and moral hygiene, within the limits of common decency. The sense of righteous certainty with which the "authorities" of the day would end life or deny birth and attempt to control the personal health of everyone seems to grow in direct proportion to the moral confusion of the world.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

ATTEMPTS at "Progressive Education" have frequently stimulated vitriolic criticism from parents on the ground that, "after all, we must give our children *some* discipline." The psychological root of Progressive theory is that only self-discipline will last, anyway, and that parents need to be patient in allowing the child to bring his own scattered desires into some sort of order. The most fantastic account of Progressive school "freedom" with which we are familiar described a news-reporter's visit to a classroom in which twelve-year-olds strolled in and out at will and were occasionally known to light cigars at their desks. The reporter was considerably impressed, however, by the fact that the children who were paying attention to the classroom activities were *really* paying attention.

It seems to us that some ground must be found for evaluating the weaknesses inherent in both the system of rigid external discipline and the complete *laissez faire* lack of system. We cannot take a little of each philosophy and combine them, for they are contradictory. Parents need, perhaps, a new start in their thinking about education. Here are a few suggestions:

The root of rigid discipline is impatience. Nearly every parent will be willing to spend a *little* time trying to *suggest* that a certain task or study is "for the child's own good." But if the child does not fully accept this thesis without much delay, compulsion techniques are usually adopted. On the other hand, the root of the notion that children should be encouraged to do just exactly as they please is the belief that there are no basic human objectives, and that therefore it matters little just how one spends his or her time, so long as it seems enjoyable. The weakness of this attitude is its incompleteness. All of us can "enjoy" any congenial activity, and yet might enjoy that same thing much more in different proportion, or if properly subordinated to some general purpose. In terms of the emotions, education might be said to be the task of refining and broadening emotional responses to include a wider area of human appreciation. Yet the child who meekly accepts a rule-of-thumb plan of life suffers from a latent fear of individual inadequacy. He depends upon borrowed values rather than upon himself, and this dependence alone can deprive one of the opportunity of being fully "happy" or fully creative in society.

Is it possible to project ourselves into a three-year-old's world? The method and plan of education which will bear a continuing influence upon all later life is at this time already taking shape. Most of the time, the youngest of children are happiest if they are able to feel some sense of purpose in what they are doing. The child who finds a certain enjoyment in gradually converting a bar of soap into a mass of bubbles may find an even greater enjoyment in washing something with that soap. It is as if a human being has an innate capacity for preferring purposeful activities. The chances are excellent that a child will derive more joy from helping to dress the baby than from helping to dress a doll. So it seems important to devise ways of helping to relate the explorative activities of the child to the necessities of household life. If the child loves to daub paint, let him daub it on something that needs to be painted. For while the youngest of children float in a sea of explorative impulses, often entirely unrelated one to the other, they seem to sense the integration of purposiveness in their parent's activities, and gravitate toward identifying themselves with whatever added incentive reaches them from this source. Of course, the only theory of the essential nature of the child which will support such arguments is that the child expands from *within outwards* rather than by the conditioning effect of external stimuli.

If we explore this approach a little further, it is possible that we will find some explanation for the curious fact that children hate to be rushed into doing anything. Frequently a well-meant,

constructive suggestion will cause instantaneous opposition from the child—pettiness, unwillingness and various overt manifestations of disinclination. And we say, "Of course this is to be expected. A child is, after all, only a little animal." Yet if we reflect that many adults, even the most gifted, intellectually, frequently display considerable wariness or resentment if *coerced* into any line of action, we may wonder if the child's unwillingness is not commingled with a first awareness of moral independence. To always do something at the exact *moment* requested by the parent, particularly if there is no clear reason why immediacy is essential, leaves the embryonic mind of the child no opportunity to exercise the faculty of choice.

Mechanical obedience has always engendered a psychology of avoidance, for the reason that the full energies of the child cannot participate in the act required of him, and the child, like every other human being, seeks an opportunity for *full* expression—and shows recalcitrance if he must participate in things half-heartedly. Insofar as this principle can be applied to the preferences of the "progressive" educator, there seems to be a strong point in the latter's favor. Even two- or three-year-olds often require no more than a minute or two to make up their minds that they would *like* to do what their parents ask of them, and if they *do* make up their own minds, there is pleasure instead of a slight resentment in the execution of the task. It is, of course, particularly important for the parents to be prepared to accept a few setbacks—times when emotional disturbance of the child prolongs the period of opposition. But since such a method expects the most and the best from the child, it is logical to believe that it eventually will inspire self-reliance.

Certainly there is no "method" which, in its simplest formulation, can provide a sure way for integrating the capacities of the child with the necessities of the communal life of the family. Yet there is one unquestionable value that may be derived by parental thoughtfulness on these matters of discipline: parents themselves can acquire a great *self*-discipline by patient evaluation, and the self-disciplined parent is obviously the best fitted to encourage the development of the self-disciplined child.

FRONTIERS
The Prison System

THE "Frontiers" article "Institutional Reform" (MANAS, Jan. 5), which quoted at length from three writers dealing with the Federal prison system, has called forth comment from a reader who is himself a Correctional Officer in a Federal Institution. Out of his years of experience as a guard, he offers these conclusions:

> First of all, what is the average convict like? I have found that, in the mass, he has two definite characteristics. One, he is extremely selfish and his lack of consideration for others, even his own cell-mates, is, at times, amazing. He little realizes nor cares that, in all walks of life, the man who asks without offering, begs with a closed fist. In fact, he is inclined to regard the closed fist as an achievement rather than a handicap.
>
> But his worst characteristic—and one that keeps him in constant jeopardy—is the firm belief that his fate is not his fault. It is a most common error. Yet, one of the affirmations of philosophy is that nothing ever happens to a person that is not, intrinsically, like the person that it happens to....
>
> Let us have some philosophical comment on this matter. . . .What would *you* do with these men who have grown belligerent and anti-social struggling with the problem of themselves and calling it "the law," "the social system" and "the police"?

It is difficult to disagree materially with any of the observations of this reader; at best, we can only add to them. And the question of what "we" would do, while a fair one, will hardly be answered satisfactorily, although we may try.

Take the idea that "nothing ever happens to a person that is not, intrinsically, like the person that it happens to." A man may believe this, as Emerson, Thoreau and many others have believed it, but can he demand that others accept it as part of their personal philosophy? It seems reasonable to say that before he makes this demand—if ever—in his personal relations with others, he has first to be absolutely just, himself, to all others; and if he would like to see people generally adopt this view in their relations with the prevailing social system, he has a similar obligation to see that the social system embodies practical justice in every respect. How else can he defend his view as based on facts?

Our correspondent remarks that the Frontiers article referred to stated the viewpoint of prison inmates. This viewpoint, however, is at least partly vindicated by modern penologists. We quote from Dr. Charles B. Thompson, senior psychiatrist of the Psychiatric Clinic, Court of General Sessions, New York City, on the effects of imprisonment on adult criminals. He writes:

> The first point I should like to bring out is that, beginning with the moment of apprehension, prisoners are ordinarily treated with contempt and harshness. Involuntarily we assume the attitude that those suspected of crime are necessarily guilty. Arrest always means actual violence to the individual's feelings and too often to his body as well, for far too many prisoners complain of having been given the "third degree." . . . All are regarded as law breakers, people apart, as somehow a different species of being whose human wants and physical ills do not merit the consideration that those of other people receive. This in spite of the fact that many who are so treated may in due course be completely acquitted of all accusation. So when the prisoners first come to us, they already feel marked off, cowed or resentful, people without privileges. That this is not their usual reaction, but is definitely caused by the incarceration, is demonstrated by their markedly changed bearing when they reappear as probationers and are relatively free men again.

Dr. Thompson notes particularly the disintegrating effects of enforced idleness on persons who are arrested. The circumstances of detention encourage them to brood upon their wrongs, imagined or actual. "Many say that they feel constantly irritated—'on edge'—and on the lookout for a fight." The psychiatrist continues:

> One of the points that have attracted the attention of writers is the *inconsistency and injustices of the processes of law.* The prisoners feel this deeply. They see important decisions with regard to men's lives being entrusted to unintelligent and uninterested jurists who make no pretense of trying to understand the case. They complain of this indifference of the jury. The prisoner sees that the

men of means who can afford able lawyers are often acquitted, while the poor, who can afford but mediocre or half-hearted attorneys, are convicted. . . .

Many crimes do not merit the month or two of incarceration between arrest and the final receipt of a suspended sentence; yet the individual is held by, and at the expense of, the state, and his job may be lost and his family destitute by the circumstance. In contrast with most of the young prisoners, the children of wealthy parents may have powerful lawyers acting on their behalf; pressure may be brought to have bail arranged; the whole process is made much less rigorous. Not infrequently we hear from the prisoners the bitter comment: "Rich man's justice." In a word, the general effect of their institutionalization is to render most prisoners disillusioned, disappointed, and bitter with regard to the processes of justice. *(Mental Hygiene,* January, 1940.)

Dr. Thompson concludes with a description of some 40 to 50 per cent of those examined in his clinic—persons who answer more or less to the character given the typical convict by our present correspondent. There is no question but that the description is correct. But what of the responsibility of society itself? Admitted that the "hardened criminal" presents a difficult if not insoluble problem—it is still a fact that the processes of arrest, prosecution and imprisonment contribute to the hardening. This is the fact which we, as citizens, have to consider, for this is the influence for which *we* are responsible.

The point we are trying to make, here, is that the anti-social tendencies of a large portion of the men in prison cannot be used to justify the dehumanizing methods of either the criminal courts or the prison system. The courts and the prisons, in their own way, are anti-social institutions, as Dr. Thompson's evidence as well as other research abundantly shows. The courts and the penal system, acting for society, deprive the convicted criminal of his freedom. They say to him, in effect, You are dangerous to other people; you do not show normal responsibility, and must be segregated from the rest of the population. Society, in other words, assumes responsibility for his behavior. It directs and controls the most intimate details of his life, on the theory that he cannot be permitted to do these things for himself. Under the extreme necessity of protecting the rest of the people from criminal behavior, society places the convicted man in a situation where his opportunity for normal human relationships and activities is eliminated almost entirely. The fact that he does not want to engage in what most people regard as normal human relationships is beside the point. In prison, he is *prevented* from doing so, and this, once a man is imprisoned, becomes the responsibility of society, which then has the obligation of making every possible effort to create the conditions under which the criminal may rebecome a normal, useful citizen.

This problem, obviously, calls for extraordinary social intelligence. Not only administrators who are also educators are needed, but an enlightened public opinion that will support them is necessary, too. The social intelligence we speak of will not deny the destructive traits that characterize many men who violate the law. It will not sentimentalize over or "pamper" men who behave like brutes and degenerates. But, on the other hand, it will not tolerate the cruelty and wholesale condemnation which is almost certain to stamp out even the faint sparks of humanity which may remain in many of these men. The humanity in criminals is just as sacred as the humanity of law-abiding citizens, and so long as the law-abiding citizens ignore this truth, prisons will be breeding-grounds for crime instead of places where men are given opportunity to learn self-discipline and self-respect.